

FOUR CHANGES, BUT WYCOMBE STRUGGLE AGAIN

A NEW-LOOK Wycombe Wanderers side, with four changes and a number of positional switches, gave a most unconvincing display against Bishop's Stortford in Saturday's Rothmans Isthmian League Division One match at Loakes Park.

Wanderers, despite taking a 23rd minute lead through the consistent Tony Horseman, had to settle for a draw and had it not been for two brilliant saves at either end of the game by John Maskell, they could well have slumped to their second home league defeat of the season.

Anxious to improve on his side's recent performances, Blues' manager Brian Lee was forced to make experiments and judging on this performance none of them was a whole hearted success.

Geoff Anthony, out for two weeks with a pulled thigh muscle, returned to the forward-line in place of Derek Harris where he joined Mick Holifield, who normally plays in mid-field and Horseman, thus making one of the shortest front-lines Wycombe can ever have fielded.

Holifield's place in mid-field was taken by the inexperienced

Graham Mackenzie. Lining up alongside him were Paul Birdseye, who normally plays at right-back and newcomer Tommy James. They replaced Terry Reardon, indisposed with influenza and Howard Kennedy.

Newcomer James left Hayes at the end of last season after

people playing below par. Wanderers did well to draw. Horseman and Anthony, in particular, worked tirelessly upfront while Ray Eaton and Keith Mead defended solidly.

Wanderers and their fans were given a shock in the fifth minute when Kenny Gaine

penalty area was tapped sideways to defender Brian Davis who unleashed a tremendous drive. However Maskell reacted like a cat and dived to his left to turn the ball for a corner.

Sixty seconds later Stortford had another chance to equalise

already stretched when Kevin Mulkern, formerly of Amersham Town, flicked the ball to Peter Twigg who found the net from close range with Maskell already drawn out of position.

This jolted Wanderers and they nearly let in another goal immediately afterwards when Alexander played the ball straight to Mackenzie in the penalty area but the centre-forward shot over.

In the 64th minute Dylan Evans came on for Graham Mackenzie with Holifield moving back into the mid-field the position he prefers. Evans played pretty well and made one quick break down the right which resulted in Holifield shooting wide.

Wycombe must have been desperately close to receiving a penalty when Anthony was apparently brought down by Colin Harris, but it needed a fine low stop by Maskell to prevent Brown's header from giving Stortford a shock victory.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; D. Alexander, R. Eaton, K. Mead, J. Delaney; P. Birdseye, G. Anthony, G. Mackenzie (sub D. Evans 64 mins), A. Horseman, M. Holifield, T. James.

STORTFORD: P. Kitson; C. Harris, B. Davis, F. Flack, V. Clarke, K. Mulkern, P. Leakey, S. Brown, J. Mackenzie, P. Twigg, K. Gaine. Sub N. Springham (not used).

Referee: K. Underwood (Chadwell Heath, Essex).

Half-time: 1-0. **Scorers:** Wycombe — Horseman (23 mins), Stortford — Twigg (59).

Official paying attendance: 1,200. **Approx total attendance** 1,500.

By **MICHAEL KNOX** Wycombe W. 1, Bishop's S. 1

two years in the first team. Before that he had played with both Maidenhead and Slough. It would be unfair to judge him on his performance considering that this was his first competitive game of football of the season and that the players around him were really struggling.

Birdseye understandably never got to grips with the game in his new position and gave away much too much possession for comfort. Mackenzie produced one or two good moves but was too anonymous before being replaced in the 64th minute.

Lee's final experiment was in putting Alexander in Birdseye's old position at right back. This proved a qualified success. He did well in the air and covered busily although his distribution was poor.

Considering the number of

headed the ball past Maskell at the far post after Brown's long throw had been headed on by John Mackenzie. But referee Keith Underwood, who was on the spot, disallowed the effort for a push on Maskell.

The Blues, with so many new faces in different positions, started slowly conceding three corners in the first 12 minutes but they slowly found their feet and forced two corners themselves before Horseman opened the scoring.

Stortford's defence failed to clear the ball after shots by Mackenzie and Anthony had been blocked and Horseman delivered the final thrust with a low 10 yard shot inside the left hand upright, for his 499th goal for Wanderers.

Two minutes later Stortford so nearly equalised. A free-kick five yards outside the Wycombe

and again the trouble was caused by Brown's long throw. Vic Clarke won the ball in the air and nodded it to Mackenzie who had a clear shot from five yards out. But to his team's agony and Wycombe's relief he completely missed his kick.

Stortford's defence was under no great pressure although Holifield just failed with a header after a tremendous 1-2 between Horseman and Anthony on the right hand edge of the penalty area.

Wanderers looked more confident after the break with James showing some good touches when moving forward. However he was to spend most of the time on the defensive. Just as Wanderers appeared to be taking control they conceded the equaliser.

It came in the 59th minute. The Wycombe defence was